DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 255 581 TM 850 229

AUTHOR Broadfoot, Patricia
TITLE Recent Developments in Assessment and Examination Procedures in France.
PUB DATE 2 Apr 85
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (69th, Chicago, IL, March 31-April 4, 1985). Some pages contain broken type.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Assessment; *Educational Change; Educational Policy; Foreign Countries; Government School Relationship; National Competency Tests; *Politics of Education; Secondary Education; Student Evaluation; Student Records; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS *France; Haby (Rene)

ABSTRACT

Recent changes in educational assessment in France reflect pressures to modernize the French educational system to align it with prevailing democratic and egalitarian values and to respond to the economy's vocational training needs. After providing background on the French educational system, this paper discusses two areas of secondary school level (ages 11 through 18) assessment change: (1) the 1975 replacement of the 16+ Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle (the qualification examination at the end of compulsory education) with a continuous assessment and guidance process called "orientation" by Rene Haby, then Minister of Education; and (2) the current pressure for reform of the traditional Baccalaureat examination at the upper secondary education level due to both the higher value given the "Bac 'C'" (mathematics and physical sciences) form by universities and its general "devaluation." As in other countries, the general trends of assessment reform in France are: (1) postponing the key point of selection as educational levels expand; (2) making assessment more comprehensive by incorporating more personal qualities and skills; and (3) increasing the delegation of assessment responsibilities to teachers. French teachers, however, are neither committed to, nor prepared for, these new responsibilities and the accompanying exposure to public censure. Assessment may become a major casualty of a heavily centralized education system torn between tradition and change. (BS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED255581

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN ASSESSMENT AND EXAMINATION PROCEDURES IN FRANCE

Patricia Broadfoot

School of Education
University of Bristol
35 Berkeley Square
Bristol BS8 1JA

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P.M. Broadfoot

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

TM 850 229

Paper for an invited symposium on 'Recent developments in assessment and examination procedures: from an international perspective'. Palmer House Hotel, Chicago, April 2, 1985

In France, as in many other industrialising societies, the early history of educational assessment is dominated by the need for examinations to provide for standardised curricula and for the attestation of professional competence. During the nineteenth century, however, these concerns gradually gave way to an increasing emphasis on the role of examinations in the regulation of competition for places within the new, more flexible social order. With the expansion of educational provision in the twentieth century, this role now predominates. Recently, pressures for greater democracy and opportunity in educational provision have resulted in a radical restructuring of the traditionally highly selective and elitist educational system, with a commitment to the comprehensivisation of secondary schooling going far beyond the institution of a common school, as has happened for example in England and Wales, to include significant changes in curriculum, internal school organisation and, not least, assessment procedures.[1.] Notable among these last has been the virtual abolition of all public examinations below the 18+ Baccalauréat level together with - officially at least - the regular promotion tests during the course of schooling and their replacement with continuous assessment by teachers. The Baccalauréat too, whilst still a formal public examination, has been subject to major reorganisation and there is growing pressure for it also to become an award based on continuous assessment.[2.]

In this paper I shall review some of these recent developments in assessment procedures in order to highlight the way in which those pervasive and in many ways contradictory pressures common to the education systems of industrial societies at the present time are being mediated by the particular traditions and ideals that characterise French educational provision. In the interests of brevity, I shall refer only to developments at the 11-18 stage of secondary schooling although trends parallel to those I describe are also discernible in the further and higher education sectors. In order to set these developments in their context, I shall first describe very briefly the arrangements for assessment and certification that existed prior to the well-known 'Haby' reforms of 1975 which may be regarded as something of a watershed in the attempts to modernise French education and to bring it in line with prevailing democratic and egalitarian values. At the same time, the Haby reforms also heralded the parallel and now increasingly dominant theme of vocationalism and the

economy's growing need for differentially-trained, technically-oriented school-leavers.

The Context for Change

From the earliest days of the nineteenth century, French educational provision was recognisably a system. In particular the early establishment of a range of national qualifications was significant in making a reality of one of the major principles of the Université - supreme central control. A decree of 1808 stated that no-one could teach without a qualification from the Université or without being a member or graduate of one of its faculties. No other institution could deliver valid diplomas since 'diplômes reservées à l'Etat' was one of the 'grands principes' of French education.[3.]

Until well into this century, the Baccalauréat preformed the dual functions of maintaining the social bias of the education system in favour of the bourgeoisie[4.] and of preserving the ideal of equality in education by subjecting all candidates to a common educational experience,[5.] a communality that was only made a reality in practice, given the size and complexity of the educational system, by the existence of national examinations, despite the provision of detailed curricular objectives.[6.,7.] Armytage[8.] goes as far as to argue that an examination as uniform as the Baccalauréat was only possible in a highly centralised system.

In higher education, too, although it enjoyed considerably more curricular freedom, the same assumption that national certificates were necessary to ensure national equality of provision has traditionally been in evidence:

> "The French, it has often been noted, have a passion for diplomas and equality; they believe that the former, because it is awarded according to uniform rules, ensure the latter". [9.]

If examinations have played an important role in France as a means of ensuring a considerable degree of national homogeneity in educational standards and practice, they have also been of central importance in legitimating the pre-eminent position of a liberal-classical, academic curriculum;[10.] and in regulating access to different levels of employment. Thus, despite the strongly centralised control of the curriculum and pedagogy, not least through the standardisation of teacher-training procedures, as well as the explicit provision of detailed 'course programmes' and regular teacher-inspection, it was arguably the

State monopoly over public examinations and certification that was most instrumental in the maintenance of national homogeneity[11]. as indeed it was explicitly intended to be, for such a monopoly could readily be justified in the enduring French passion for diplomas as a reflection of meritocratic equality.

It is this passion that also continues to provide strong support for central control of the educational system since many teachers still feel as Napoleon did when he first instituted a national education system in 1808, that only through such centralisation can national unity and equality of provision irrespective of region or class be ensured. Thus although the two major examination qualifications that existed prior to the Haby reforms - the 16+ Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle (also known as the Brevet d'Enseignement Secondaire) and the 18+ Baccalaureat, were both locally set and administered,[12] they are regarded as national qualifications. Both examinations represented the logical climax of a sequentially structured curriculum in which academic prowess and competitiveness were the dominant characteristics.

Recent Examination Reforms within Compulsory Schooling

It was in an effort to provide some worthwhile and realistic qualification for the majority of pupils whose interests and abilities did not fit them for such a system that one of the most major attempts at examination reform was instituted in the mid seventies by Minister of Education, René Haby, who as part of his sweeping reforms sought to replace the 'brevet' by a process of continuous assessment and guidance known as 'orientation'. It is an interesting feature of French education that belief in the power of the centrally-determined curriculum to severely limit teachers' freedom to depart from the formal syllabus seems to make it a great deal easier to bring about examination reform. Where one of the major stumbling blocks in a decentralised education system like that of England and Wales is the fear that removal of public examination constraints will result in curriculum anarchy, in France, the process of 16+ examination reform and indeed abolition has been accomplished with comparatively little controversy compared with that which tends to surround the smallest attempt at change in some other countries.

Having said this, the alternative procedures proposed under the 'Haby' reforms provoked a storm of protest at the heart of which lay on the one hand, concern amongst teachers at the degree of responsibility, and hence vulnerability to public pressure such continuous assessment implied for them and, on the other, fear of the insidious potential for

control such dossiers - particularly if computerised as Haby proposed - would have. A third, perhaps less widely bruited element in teachers' opposition was undoubtedly their concern at the increased workload such continuous assessment implied.

Haby's only concession to the storm of protest generated by a wide variety of educational groups, was to drop the idea of computerising the assessment 'dossiers' which were to follow children from the beginning to the end of their schooling. Teachers are now required to record children's personal history and progress in individual 'dossiers'; to hold regular meetings with the 'orientation' counsellor - a key figure in the procedure, a school doctor, psychologist and parents' representatives and to decide at the end of second and fourth years of secondary schooling the appropriate educational and career route for each pupil. Although theoretically parents have the right both to choose and refuse what the school decides and, in extreme cases, may demand that their child be entered for a formal examination, very few parents challenge the combined weight of teacher opinion.[13.] In reality it is teachers who now play the determining role in pupil orientation through their classwork assessments, the recommendations of the 'Class Council' and the powerful 'Council of Teachers' which represents the school as a whole.

It is a characteristic of French education that so long as the government itself is not vulnerable, reforms can be pushed through sometimes in the teeth of considerable opposition. This is one reason why there are so many national protests and strikes among teachers since this is virtually the only way of opposing the enormous power of political decisions supported by an autonomous and autocratic national Ministry of Education which is both the employer of every teacher in the formal system and the arbiter of everything that is to be done. But although this powerful central machinery allowed the orientation procedure to become policy, it could not ensure professional support for the change nor the skills necessary to implement it properly. As with so many other reforms in French education such as the contemporaneous institution of mixed-ability teaching in the first two years of secondary education, very little in the way of training or extra resources were provided to help teachers implement the changes. Not surprisingly the result was a feeling little short of despair amongst the majority of teachers faced with implementing pedagogical procedures and curriculum change largely outside their experience and for which they were, for the most part, untrained.

This despair and the declining job satisfaction associated with it has led to a crisis of morale amongst French teachers reflected in recent years in a spate of best-selling volumes about the problems teachers' face.[14.] This despair is also reflected in a very high level of antipathy, even hostility, towards the national Ministry which imposes its will but does relatively little to support its employees in the new demands that an increasingly technological, vocational, democratic and egalitarian secondary education is imposing on them.

Thus although the abolition of external examinations at the end of compulsory schooling would seem in theory to provide a solution to the problem of controlling parent and pupil frustration without negating the principles of equality and democracy, the reality seems to be rather different. On the one hand the orientation procedure is not well enough understood, resourced or supported for it to be done conscientiously by teachers with the result that many dossiers are not filled in properly and guidance is not the continuous and supportive process it was intended to be, but often simply the recognition of a choice already made - often by default. On the other hand, as ought to have been anticipated, given the immense amount of evidence available on the bias, particularly class bias, inherent in teachers' assessments of their pupils, it is becoming clear that the procedure is not as egalitarian as it was intended to be since orientation towards vocational education is six times more frequent among the working class.[15.]

Thus whilst the Ministry rhetoric justifies orientation in the following terms:

> "For the whole of his school life he will be the object of continuous assessment on the part of his educators which will allow teaching to be better adapted to his needs, will help him to know himself and to prepare well for his future school and professional career choice" [16.]

Many people feel that the procedure does not function as a benign diagnostic assessment and educational guidance procedure, but as a source of social control. Firstly 'assessment' in this case provides for a far more comprehensive evaluation of the individual than does the traditional subject examination since it includes personal and family characteristics and a good deal of descriptive information. Secondly orientation is submitted to, not chosen'.[17.] There is a gap between law and reality over the notion of choice of educational paths. Future orientation tends to be predicted by primary schooling, by social group and by teachers' decisions. In some rural areas too, organisational factors further limit

the potential choice. As Herzlich[18.] suggests:

> "Thus, for the most part, orientation functions as a mechanism of successive exclusions to the detriment of less favoured social groups ... one says what one wants: they say if one can ..." [19.]

or, as the Le Grand Report puts it, 'être orienté' now means to be put into a 'short' (i.e. less prestigious) cycle and a lycée d'enseignement professionel for vocational training. It is rooted in failure rather than success and its image is of arbitrary manipulation. Thus many such youngsters are 'cooled out' before they reach the stage of any public examination,[20.] and many more, it is argued, are forced to make career decisions before they feel able to decide. Great reliance is placed on the results of 'objective' tests at the end of troisième (the end of the compulsory stage of schooling) which, when combined in the dossier with the orientation counsellor's report, provides the principal basis for subsequent educational and career choice despite what research has revealed to be its low predictive power.[21.] Those who choose and are chosen to continue in the formal school system by entering the 'classes de seconde' of a lycée are accompanied by their 'dossier scolaire' which continues to play an important role in determining the choice of Baccalauréat option available and, in many cases, eventual selection for a particular course of higher education.

The long-term significance of an assessment system in which the arbitrary power of the individual teacher is replaced by the benign and scientific efficiency of an impersonal norm which is simply operated by teachers has yet to be understood or even recognised.[22.] Berger[23.] suggests that in French education 'control' - assessment based on impersonal norms - is replacing 'evaluation' - the personal assessment of an individual's value. Furthermore, he suggests that the growth of 'orientation' as the dominant vehicle of that 'control' is part of a more general movement towards 'corporate management' in education in which the traditional, personal authority of local officials, inspectors and teachers is being replaced by the impersonal regulation of statutory obligations and mechanised administration.

Crucial to this development is a computer-based facility for collecting and coordinating a whole range of information about the functioning of the education system on a national basis.[24.] Thus, if 'orientation' is part of a policy of 'democratisation', it is also, and more significantly, closely connected with this 'rationalisation' of educational administration and hence control.

"Orientation leads almost inevitably to computer-based administration". 25.

If continuous assessment in relation to detailed, nationally prescribed norms of performance eliminates the injustices of the caprice of an individual teacher and the variations in the exam papers set by the various Départements,[26.] it is by the same token more irresistible. Moreover, it is also a means of making a practical reality of the tradition of imposing curricular and pedagogic norms which was hitherto the responsibility of the inspector and thus represents a shift from 'process' to 'product' evaluation.

Thus, the assessment 'dossier' - the elaborate profile which follows a pupil throughout his or her school career - combined with a series of 'orientation' decisions taken by a pupil's teachers in the periodic meetings of the Conseil de Classe, carries into the classroom the same assumptions of scientific rationality which characterise all aspects of corporate management. That is to say that the norms of performance chosen are taken to be in some sense absolute and given the pseudo-legitimacy of science and not the values of a particular group and time. As authority within the education system is thereby dispersed, control becomes a composite and increasingly impersonal phenomenon, impossible to pin down and hence to resist. If what is to be taught to whom, when, how and why, can only be answered by reference to particular values, disguising such pedagogical and curricular decisions under the cloak of an apparently objective, scientific assessment is perhaps the most effective form of educational (and thus social?) control yet developed.

At the same time it is likely to ensure, too, a relatively novel way of making central control a reality through the national provision of detailed curricular objectives which are thus translated into evaluation criteria. The co-existence of this trend with an already centralised system is doubly significant in the contemporary utilitarian climate, in that following the model of the 'classes préparatoires', tracks or orientations which correspond most to society's current economic needs can receive most emphasis; the number of places available in each type of course can thus be determined according to a 'numerus clausus', this restriction of opportunity being arguably a good deal more significant than the actual content of such courses. This is explicitly recognised in the 1983 Prost Report.

> "In the first place, the criteria chosen are uniform. Orientation rarely takes into account pupils' centres of interest and the diversity of their aptitudes. The two

> major criteria are their results in mathematics and their age (as we have already indicated). In the second place, orientation is frequently transformed into a procedure of practicality. Pupils must be divided up between the sections that exist, according to the space available in different establishments. This bureaucratic procedure, together with the rigidity of the learning programme, engenders in families a feeling of helplessness in the face of a blind technostructure. In the third place, it (orientation) constitutes a vast fragmented distillation which divides up pupils between streams which are strongly bounded and hierarchic as a function of dominant social models: supremacy of training in abstract science, less consideration for technical and professional training ..." (p.134) 27.

1982 saw the publication of a major report on the state of the junior secondary 'collège' which had been instituted as one of its first tasks by the newly-elected socialist government. This report, written by one of France's leading educational radicals, Professor Louis Le Grand, drew attention to some of these problems with orientation - for example, pupils' lack of self-knowledge and of the range of possible employment opportunities which, Le Grand suggests, often makes it difficult for pupils to choose the most suitable career path even where appropriate provision for this exists which is itself relatively rare. The Report urges the introduction of a personal 'tutorial' system in the collège which can take over the existing guidance function of orientation, confining the latter to a single summative evaluation at the end of 'troisième'.[28] "This certificate is the statement, in the form of a profile, of the objectives achieved by the pupil. It is the only point at which there is a summative evaluation".[29] Although this proposal has provoked considerable opposition amongst teachers in particular[30] and thus is unlikely to be implemented, it does suggest that French educational thinking is currently moving in a very similar direction to that in England in giving increased emphasis to pastoral care and pupil-teacher dialogue in 'formative' evaluation which culminates at the point of school-leaving, in a positive, summative 'profile' report which provides a comprehensive statement of the pupils' school achievements. It is too early to predict what the effect of such a move might be, but previous experience suggests that however disguised, the use of school qualifications for selection will still create a sense of failure for many pupils with all the problems that this causes.

Nevertheless it is worth reiterating the point that the 'orientation' procedure neatly solves several problems at once. First it provides a means of selection which minimises

potential opposition in appearing egalitarian and democratic in line with the prevailing educational rhetoric. Secondly, it provides for greater 'product evaluation' control of teachers by clearing away some of the traditional assessment bureaucracy and making teachers directly and visibly responsible for their actions. Thirdly, it allows for a more technocratic, depersonalised approach to educational administration and more efficient 'process evaluation'. Fourthly, it provides for the most effective sort of assessment control of teachers - a combination of 'process' and 'product' evaluation in which the central prescription of curriculum norms is linked to the formal processes of pupil assessment.

Recent Reforms in the Upper Levels of Secondary Schooling

It is interesting to compare these developments in examination procedures at the end of compulsory schooling with developments in the 'senior secondary' Baccalauréat matriculation examination which since it was first instituted in 1808 has given automatic right of access to university education and indeed was originally regarded as the first stage of such education. Originally a two-stage examination, the 'Bac' is now a one-off 'grouped' examination in which students pursue a particular specialism within a common curriculum core. It has always been the case that such specialisms are not regarded equally, the most prestigious option traditionally being classics. Since the early 1950s however, as Bourdieu [31.] so well documents, by far the most prestigious course has been that leading to the Bac 'C' - Mathematics and Physical Sciences. Despite the fact that any 'Bac' holder is theoretically entitled to enter any University faculty, in practice the possession of the certificate per se no longer guarantees the holder a free choice of subject specialism in higher education. Apart from the fact that some universities and the very popular University Institutes of Technology (IUTs) have the right to dispense with the Baccalauréat entirely, increasing pressure of numbers has led many other faculties to discriminate more or less overtly on the basis of the Baccalauréat specialism pursued and the candidate's school record.[32.]

Bac 'C' is the only specialism that allows successful students access to the whole range of disciplines in higher education. Thus not surprisingly there is considerable competition within the senior secondary school (lycée) to be allowed to take the Bac 'C' option and many students will repeat a year in order to achieve a placement on this course. Given

this situation the most talented students in every subject are likely to aspire to specialise in Mathematics and Science for the Baccalauréat. In this way, what is intended to be a qualitative specialisation between equal but different curriculum strands actually acts as a quantitative selection device between pupils of different levels of achievement.

This phenomenon, by no means unique to France, is widely deplored in official circles. Haby himself tried to reform the Baccalauréat by returning to a two-stage model based on a general first part and a more specialised second part intended in its turn to encourage universities to specify the relevant Baccalauréat subjects as entrance criteria rather than the ubiquitous Bac 'C'. The first stage of such a reform was instituted in 1981 by means of a 'common core' first year lycée curriculum which allows students to postpone specialisation.

The basic problem, however, is more fundamental than this since it concerns the 'devaluation' of the Baccalauréat as it is obtained by more and more students. The phenomenon of 'qualification inflation' [33] which besets the progressive expansion of education systems so that what were once élite credentials become generally more accessible as they become part of mass educational provision, has posed a major problem for French education. Some form of 'weeding out' procedure is now highly necessary in the more popular university faculties but the weight of tradition surrounding the Baccalauréat resists any fundamental change in its status.

Although, as I have suggested, there is considerable lip-service paid to the idea of abolishing the Baccalauréat, the recent Prost report on upper secondary schooling which was instigated by the Mitterand Government, stopped well short of abolition in its recommendations for Baccalauréat reform. It suggested instead a simpler, more de-centralised organisation for the examination with largely locally set papers and continuous assessment. Perhaps more significantly Prost introduced the idea, currently much in favour in Scotland and England and Wales of what these countries refer to as 'grade-related criteria' and what Prost terms 'a certain number of competences linked to referential criteria for each type of learning' (p.146). This is the means, Prost suggests, of overcoming the well-known subject and geographical variations in the supposedly uniform Baccalauréat without provoking the hostility that would result from any attempt to remove one of the last bastions of tradition in French education.[34]

It is too early to say whether the Prost Report recommendations will have any effect on the problem. Meanwhile many University faculties will continue to operate a 'numerus clausus' entry policy or will subject students to selection examinations during or even at the end of their university studies in an attempt to counteract a decline in their status brought about by the large number of unemployed graduates. Most of the unrest in recent years in French higher education has been associated with the perceived irrelevance of much of the content of university courses and their insufficiently selective entrance criteria.

Underlying this unrest it is possible to discern a more general conflict between the 'old humanist' ideals[35.] traditional to French education in which the 'ésprit Carthesian' combines support for academic excellence and equality of opportunity and the 'new industrialist' values of an increasingly utilitarian society[36.] that regards the role of education as one of providing the skilled labour needed by the economy rather than the general development of the individual intellect. The fact that philosophy is still a compulsory 'core' subject in the Baccalauréat is testimony to the continuing strength of the liberal ideal. Equally the tensions evident in attempts to remove from the Baccalauréat the characteristics inherited from the time when it was the first stage of élite education and to replace them with specialist preparatory education for subsequent vocationally-oriented courses indicate that some finer complementary form of selection is likely to overtake the Baccalauréat if no reform is forthcoming.

The signs are that as in 16+ selection, it is teachers who will increasingly wield the power in this respect. The decline in value of the Baccalauréat which has been associated with its 'quantitative democratisation' and 'qualitative differentiation'[37.] has given teachers an important role in 'orienting' students into the different options. Similarly, the devaluation of the Baccalauréat has increased the importance of teachers' continuous assessment in the last two years of schooling and thus of the 'dossier scolaire' - a trend that the Prost recommendations have clearly taken into account.

Underlying Trends

Taken overall, the pressures behind the changes that have taken place in French educational assessment in recent years are on a par with those of many other countries. These general themes I have discussed in detail elsewhere [38]. but may be briefly identified as

1) the postponement of the key point of selection with the progressive expansion of successive levels of the education system;

2) the comprehensivisation of assessment to include more personal qualities and skills as well as academic attainments in the wake of a more vocationally-oriented educational ethos; and

3) the increasing delegation of the responsibility for making assessments to teachers.

This latter trend is associated in France with the need to find new ways of curbing the aspirations of the majority of students and, at the same time, providing ever-finer discrimination between them. At the same time the postponement of the key point of selection more and more to the post-Baccalauréat stage of the entrance examinations for the pinnacles of the French educational system - the Grandes Ecoles or the internal university examinations - makes it possible for teachers to take on this responsibility without the likelihood of unbearable pressure from aspiring parents being brought to bear.

As I have suggested, these same trends are identifiable in other countries. In England and Wales, for example, despite the stubborn commitment to external public examinations at 16, 17 and 18+, which is largely a product of the lack of other means of curriculum control, there is a powerful parallel growth of teacher-based assessment procedures. The various forms of comprehensive 'dossiers' currently being instituted are similar to French trends in reflecting an increasingly utilitarian and vocational rather than academic curriculum emphasis for all but the highest attaining students. This emphasis also embodies a desire to make education relevant and worthwhile for the comprehensive population now obliged to participate in the formal system at least up to the age of 16 and now almost universally, up to the age of 17 and 18.

In addition, a major plank of educational policy in the Mitterand Government has been attempts to create some measure of decentralisation within the educational system. Both the 16+ and the 18+ assessment reforms discussed in this paper reflect such an attempt to broaden the range of

teachers' professional activity. In making teachers themselves increasingly and directly responsible for the process of guidance and selection these changes may well signal the demise of the traditional role of the French secondary school teacher largely confined to the formal delivery of a set number of lessons each week. Although the Le Grand Report's explicit attempts to change this role by giving teachers much wider responsibility for their pupils' development and welfare at least at the collège stage was derided by newspaper headlines such as''Call me Mother' recommends the Le Grand Report',[39] it seems likely that the new charge upon teachers to undertake comprehensive monitoring of their students' progress will make such a change inevitable.

Thus the signs are that contemporary developments in French educational assessment procedures are likely to lead to far-reaching changes in the educational process itself. There are few indications, however, that French teachers are either committed to, or prepared for, these new responsibilities and the exposure to public censure associated with them. Traditionally their civil servant status has protected French teachers on one flank and the external examination system has protected them on the other. It seems likely that without radical changes in school organisation, pre- and in-service training which could provide some support for teachers to encourage them to shoulder these new responsibilities - and this sort of support is not characteristic of the still heavily centralised and academic French ducational machine - assessment is likely to become one of several major casualities of an education system breaking under the strain of the conflicting demands of tradition and change. The associated crisis of morale and ultimately of practice will not be confined to the teaching profession and impassioned volumes entitled 'Tant qu'il y aura.' or 'Les enseignants persecutées'. It will also include the pupils whose future is now at the mercy of procedures which have done little to attack the underlying problems besetting French education whilst fuelling teachers' feelings of powerlessness to cope with their changing role.

This highlights the need for assessment and examination reform to be planned as part of an overall reform strategy in which alongside the more obvious partnership of curriculum and assessment development, attention is given to the ideological and institutional superstructure in which such change is inevitably embedded. The highly centralised organisation of French education provides a classic example of a system in which it is possible for the letter of the law to disregard the spirit necessary for

its effective implementation. In succumbing to the temptation to change procedures rather than tackling themuch longer term and diffuse task of changing attitudes, it seems likely that the potential of the assessment reforms described in this paper to provide a genuinely different educational experience in keeping with the needs of the great majority of pupils, will be missed. The moral of this story is thus one which justifies a major place in the symposium as a whole.

Footnotes

1. It is important to stress, however, that these are largely policy changes, the degree of real change in the ethos and institutional organisation of schooling varying from school to school, since the common school and the common course could not, of themselves, democratise a system in which none of the fundamental controls or ideology were changed (see Broadfoot (1980) 'Assessment, curriculum and control in the changing pattern of centre-local relations', in Local Government Studies, November)

2. Prost, A. (1983) Les Lycées et leur Etudes au seuil du XXIième Siècle' Rapport au Directeur des lycées presenté par le Groupe de Travail National sur les Seconds Cycles. Service d'Information, Paris.

3. The Université was set up by Napoleon in 1808 as a national system of education. It embodied the two central principles of supreme central control and a state monopoly of instruction although non-élite, elementary education which had a very different purpose and was almost totally separate in its provision, was only tenuously included (see for example, Archer, M. S. (1979) Social origins of of educational systems, London/Beverley Hills: Sage

4. Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J. P. (1977) Reproduction. London: Sage

5. Rothe[illegible], H. (1968) 'The new Baccalauréat in its context', Comparative Ed[illegible]or, vol.4, no.3, June, pp. 183-197

6. Fraser, W. R. (1963) Education and society in Modern France. London: RKP

7. Anderson, R. D. (1975) Education in France 1848-70. Oxford: Oxford University Press

8. Armytage, W. H. G. (1968) The French influence on English education. London: RKP

9. Patterson, M. (1972) 'French university reform: renaissance or restoration', Comparative Education Review, June

10. Eggleston, S. J. (1984) 'School examinations - some sociological issues' in Broadfoot, P. M. (ed.) (1984) Selection, certification and control: social issues in educational assessment. Sussex: Falmer

11. Patterson, M. (1972) op.cit.

12. Le Courrier de l'Education, no.80, May 1979 describes the operation for the Académie of Reims in which, for example, there are 205,000 question papers for the Bac de Technicien alone. In 1978 there were 336,991 candidates for the Bac, 63,000 for Agrégation and Capès (secondary teaching qualification), 560,000 for various brevets and certificats professionels (CAP, BEP, BP, BT, BTS) including, in 1976, prior to the Haby reforms, 550,000 candidates for the Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle - a total of more than one million every year.

13. The Prost report (1983) reports: taux national moyen des procédures d'appel contre les décisions d'orientation en 1982 = 6.80%; taux de satisfaction de l'appel = 17.80%.

14. See, for example, Patrice Ranjard (1984) Les enseignants persecutés, Paris: Robert Jauze and Maurice Maschino (1983) Vos enfants ne m'interesse plus and (1984) Voulez-vous vraiment des enfants idiots?

15. Le Monde de l'Education, April 1980

16. "Tout au long de sa scolarité il sera l'objet de lat part de ses éducateurs d'une observation continue qui permettra de mieux adapter l'enseignement à ses besoins, l'aidera à se connaitre et à ultérieure" (ONISEP, 1979)

17. 'L'orientation est subie non choisie' Le Monde de l'Education, March 1981

18.19. 'L'orientation fonctionne ainsi en grand partie comme un mécanisme d'exclusions successive, au détriment des catégories sociales moins favorisées ... - on dit ce qu'on veut: ils disent si on peut ...' Le Monde de l'Education, April 1980.

20. Fifteen per cent of pupils do not go to college at all according to Mme B. Nonon of 'Ecole et Famille'.

21. See, for example, Ministère de l'Education, Service des Etudes informatiques et statistiques: Département des techniques et études d'évaluation (1979), 'Observation psychopédagogique des élèves de cinquième'. This body has some elements in common with the English APU as an organ of central government concerned with the evaluation of standards, but differs in that it is principally concerned with cohort studies.

22. As Cicourel, A. and Kitsuse, J. (1968) suggest in 'The social organisation of the High School and deviant adolescent careers' in Rubington, E. and Weinberg, M. (eds) Deviance: the Interactionist Perspective, New York: Macmillan, the choice process in guidance and counselling of this type is not nearly as open and voluntarist as the rhetoric tends to suggest. See also Rosenbaum, J.E. (1976) Making Inequality, the Hidden Curriculum of High School Tracking New York: Wiley

23. This is very much the argument of Michel Foucault, as set out in his 'Surveiller et Punir, Paris: Gallimard. Also I am drawing on an interview with M. Guy Berger, Département des Sciences de l'Education, Université de Paris-Vincennes.

24. Service de Statistique et de Sondage, Ministère de l'Education, Paris

25. Interview with Mme T. Catz-Trevenin, Université de Paris-Vincennes, 1980

26. See Le Monde de l'Education, no.81, March 1982, and no.92, March 1983

27. 'Classes préparatoires' are taken after the Baccaulauréat for those wishing to sit for the highly competitive examinations for selection for the Grandes Ecoles.

28. i.e. the end of the fourth and final compulsory year of secondary schooling.

29. "Ce brevet est le constat, en profil, des objectifs atteints par l'élève. C'est le seul moment d'une évaluation sommative". Synthèse du Rapport de M. Louis Le Grand (1982), Ministère de l'Education, Paris, p.104

30. See, for example, 'Ecole et Socialisme' no.26, May 1983, "Appelez-moi Maman ou la face cachée du tutorat". For other views, see also Le quotidien de Paris, 24.1.83, Le Matin 'Notre Temps', 15.6.82, Pourquoi, no.192, Feb. 1984, Le Monde de l'Education, February 1983

31. Bourdieu, P. (1976) 'The school as a conservative force: scholastic and cultural inequalities', in Eggleston, J. (ed) Contemporary Research in the Sociology of Education. London: Methuen

32. Pautler, E. (1981) 'Links between secondary and higher education in France', European Journal of Education, vol.16, no.2, pp. 185-195

33. Dore, R. (1976) The Diploma Disease. London: Allen & Unwin

34. For a study of the way in which different establishments contribute to 'Bac' success, see Le Monde de l'Education no.81, March 1982. Also, Le Monde de l'Education, November 1983, 'Faut-il supprimer le bac' and February 1984, 'Rapport Prost, diagnostic nuance'.

35. Williams, R. (1977) 'French connection', New Society, 5.5.77

36. ibid.

37. Rothera, H. (1968) op.cit.

38. Broadfoot, P. M. 1979 Assessment, Schools and Society. London: Methuen

39. See note 30 above.